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RUCNRAQ/IRAQ COLLECTIVE PRIORITY

C O N F I D E N T I A L AMMAN 009791

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BAGHDAD FOR HOSTAGE WORKING GROUP

E.O. 12958: DECL: 12/20/2015

TAGS: PREL PTER I2 JO

SUBJECT: GOJ REQUESTS USG HELP IN FREEING KIDNAPPED EMBASSY STAFFER

Classified By: CDA Daniel Rubinstein for reasons 1.4 (b and d)

¶1. (C) Dimai Haddad, head of the Foreign Minister's private office, convoked Polcouns on December 20 to formally request USG assistance in the case of Mahmoud Suleiman Musa Al Sa'edat. Sa'edat, a 58-year old Jordanian citizen accredited to the GOI as an administrative/technical staffer, is the driver for the Jordanian Charge in Baghdad. According to Haddad, the Iraqi Interior Ministry informed the GOJ that 18-20 armed men in several vehicles blocked Sa'edat's POV and abducted him at about 8:00 AM not far from his home in the Baya district of Baghdad. Haddad said Sa'edat's wife, who was present and not harmed, had confirmed this account to the Jordanian Embassy in Baghdad. Haddad reported that the Iraqi authorities deployed security forces and established checkpoints in the Baya district in response to the kidnapping. Haddad said the Jordanian Foreign Ministry had made urgent requests for assistance to the Iraqi government in Baghdad and Amman. The GOJ has received no claims of responsibility. International media are reporting the kidnapping.

¶2. (C) Haddad, the former Jordanian Charge in Baghdad, speculated that one of three scenarios will play out. The kidnappers were either:

--associated with Zarqawi and "planning to send Jordan a message,"

--seeking to exchange Sa'edat for Saijida Mubarak Atrous Al Rishawi, the would-be suicide bomber being held by the GOJ since shortly after the November 9 Amman hotel attacks, or

--ransom-seekers.

¶3. (C) Haddad and Jordan's Ambassador-designate to Iraq, Gen. Ahmad Al Lowzi, were concerned not only for Sa'edat's safety but also over the likelihood that kidnappers could extract from Sa'edat information that would endanger other Jordanian government personnel in Baghdad.

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